CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A composition for intraarticular delivery of chondrogenic polypeptides comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable admixture comprising FGF18 and hyaluronic acid.

2. The composition of claim 1 further comprising a negatively charged carrier.

3. The composition of claim 2 wherein said carrier is selected from the group consisting of low molecular weight hyaluronans, high molecular weight hyaluronans, sulfated proteoglycans, B-cyclodextrin tetradecasulphate, hydroxyapatite, alginate microspheres, chitosans, and methylcellulose.

4. The composition of claim 1 wherein said composition is a time-release formulation.

5. The composition of claim 4 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a matrix selected from the group consisting of a solution, a gel, a paste, or a putty.

6. The composition of claim 4 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a reservoir system.

7. The composition of claim 1 further comprising chondrocytes wherein said chondrocytes have been cultured in the presence of FGF18 prior to intraarticular administration.

8. The composition of claim 1 further comprising an anti-inflammatory drug.

9. A method for increasing chondrocyte proliferation in a joint of a mammal in need thereof comprising the step of administering into a synovial cavity a pharmaceutically acceptable admixture comprising FGF18 and hyaluronic acid.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said administration comprises injection.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein said administration comprises surgical implantation.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein said admixture further comprises a negatively-charged carrier selected from the group consisting of low molecular weight hyaluronans, high molecular weight hyaluronans, sulfated proteoglycans, B-cyclodextrin tetradecasulphate, hydroxyapatite, alginate microspheres, chitosans, and methylcellulose.

13. The method of claim 9 where said admixture is a time-release formulation.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a matrix selected from the group consisting of a solution, a gel, a paste, or a putty.

15. The method of claim 13 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a reservoir system.

16. The method of claim 9 wherein said admixture further comprises an anti-inflammatory drug.

17. The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of allowing growth of new cartilage tissue and surgically contouring the new cartilage surface.

18. A method of treating osteoarthritis in a mammal comprising the steps of administering into a synovial cavity a pharmaceutically acceptable admixture comprising FGF18 and hyaluronic acid.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said administration comprises injection.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein said administration comprises surgical implantation.

21. The method of claim 18 wherein said admixture further comprises a negatively-charged carrier selected from the group consisting of low molecular weight hyaluronans, high molecular weight hyaluronans, sulfated proteoglycans, B-cyclodextrin tetradecasulphate, hydroxyapatite, alginate microspheres, chitosans, and methylcellulose.

22. The method of claim 18 where said admixture is a time-release formulation.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a matrix selected from the group consisting of a solution, a gel, a paste, or a putty.

24. The method of claim 22 wherein said time-release formulation comprises a reservoir system.

25. The method of claim 18 wherein said admixture further comprises an anti-inflammatory drug.

26. The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of allowing growth of new cartilage tissue and surgically contouring the new cartilage surface.